

REMARKS

This responds to the Office Action mailed on May 30, 2006, and the references cited therewith, and to the Office Communication mailed August 17, 2006, resetting the three-month date for response as September 15, 2006.

No claims are amended; claims 1, 3-16, 20-26, 38-31, 33, 40-57, 59-63, 65-72, 79-81 and 83-90 are canceled herein (claims 2, 17-19, 27, 32, 34-39, 58, 64, 73-78 and 82 were previously canceled), new claims 91-117 are added; as a result claims 91-117 are now pending in this application.

Claims 1-90 have been canceled solely to advance the prosecution of the present application, and without prejudice to their further prosecution in an appropriately filed continuing or divisional application.

The specification has been amended to correct typographical errors and to clarify a unit of measure. No new matter has been added as a result.

For clarification, new claims 91-98 are comparable to canceled claims 65-72; new claims 99-110 are comparable to canceled claims 22-26, 28-31, 33, 63 and 79; and new claims 111-116 are comparable to canceled claims 54-57, 59 and 81. However, the terms "tuft" and "tufts" have been replaced with the terms "projection" and "projections," respectively, each occurrence, for clarification. Additionally, claim 91 recites that the opposing projections are "bondable," as originally recited, rather than "bonded." The new claims have support throughout the specification and in canceled claims 1-90. No new matter has been added as a result. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the new claims and the remarks that follow.

Interview Summary

Examiner Jennifer Boyd, Examiner's Supervisor Terrel Morris and Applicant's Representative, Barbara Clark, held a telephonic interview on August 15, 2006 in which the outstanding rejections were discussed. At the request of Examiner Morris, Ms. Clark clarified the terms "tufts" and "projections." Examiner Morris requested that the claims be amended for clarification with regard to these terms. The Examiners confirmed that the rejection in paragraph 5 of the Office Action mailed on May 30, 2006, should be an obviousness rejection under 35

U.S.C. § 103(a), rather than an anticipation rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as written. Additionally, since the newly cited Osbourne reference was not included on the PTO-892 form, the date for response was reset.

Examiner Morris also indicated, and Examiner Boyd agreed, that claim 65 is in fact distinguishable from the prior art and further stated that there is no need to recite that the projections are “bonded” to each other. The Examiners indicated that other claims with language comparable to claim 65 would also be distinguishable from the prior art. Ms. Clark spoke with Examiner Boyd again on September 1, 2006, seeking clarification of the allowable subject matter as it pertained to claims 22 and 54. Ms. Clark thanks Examiners Boyd and Morris for the courtesies extended during these interviews.

§103 Rejections of the Claims

Claims 1, 5-7, 12-15, 50-53, 60-63, 65-68, 72, 79, 80-81, 83-88 and 90 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Raidel et al. (WO 96/00625) and English equivalent Raidel et al (US 6,171,682), in view of Mende (US 5,180,620).

While Applicant believes that these claims are patentable over Raidel in view of Mende, claims 1, 5-7, 12-15, 50-53, 60-63, 65-68, 72, 79, 80-81, 83-88 and 90 have been canceled without prejudice to expedite the prosecution of the present application. Accordingly, this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is moot and Applicant requests withdrawal thereof.

Claims 22-26-28-31-33, 54-57, 59 and 89 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Raidel et al. (WO 96/00625) in view of Mende (US 5,180,620) and further in view of Osborne et al (US 6,716,441).

While Applicant believes that these claims are patentable over Raidel in view of Mende, claims 22-26-28-31-33, 54-57, 59 and 89 have been canceled without prejudice to expedite the prosecution of the present application. Accordingly, this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is moot and Applicant requests withdrawal thereof.

Claims 1, 3-16, 20-21, 50-53, 65-72, 79-81, 83-88 and 90 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) *as being anticipated* by Curro et al. (US 6,808,791) in view of Mende (US 5,180,620).

As discussed during the interview of August 15, 2006, this rejection was intended to be an obviousness rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

While Applicant believes that these claims are patentable over Curro in view of Mende, claims 1, 3-16, 20-21, 50-53, 65-72, 79-81, 83-88 and 90 have been canceled without prejudice to expedite the prosecution of the present application. Accordingly, this rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is moot and Applicant requests withdrawal thereof.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance, and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney at 515-233-3865 to facilitate prosecution of this application.

If necessary, please charge any additional fees or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 19-0743.

Respectfully submitted,

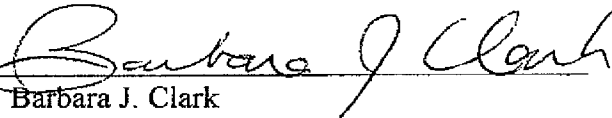
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Date SEPTEMBER 6, 2006

By


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CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being filed using the USPTO's electronic filing system EFS-Web, and is addressed to: Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on this 6 day of September 2006.

CANDIS BUENDING

Name



Signature